DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 264 894 IR 051 404

AUTHOR Blagden, Pauline
TITLE Women's Studies: An Examination of Library Use by Researchers in the Field with Special Reference to the Fawcett Library. Library Research Digest No. 14.
INSTITUTION City of London Polytechnic (England). Library and Learning Resources Service.
PUB DATE Oct 85
NOTE 26p.
AVAILABLE FROM City of London Polytechnic, Library and Learning Resources Service, Calcutta House, Old Castle St., London E1 7NT, England (3 pounds).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Libraries; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Information Seeking; Library Acquisition; *Library Catalogs; Library Facilities; *Library Materials; Library Research; Library Skills; Questionnaires; Statistical Analysis; Use Studies; *Womens Studies
IDENTIFIERS *City of London Polytechnic (England)

ABSTRACT

The Fawcett Library, a collection of international importance in the field of women's studies, faces money, space, and staff time constraints and has been reviewing its acquisitions policy with these factors in mind. This study was undertaken to gain insight into (1) library use in general by researchers in the field of women's studies, and (2) the use of the Fawcett Library and its catalog, "BiblioFem," including the reasons for non-use by those to whom it seemed potentially relevant. The study was conducted in two parts; (1) 178 questionnaires were mailed to a list of researchers compiled from the Research Index at the Feminist Library and the British Library's Research in British Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges; and (2) 8 semi-structured interviews were conducted with library users in the Fawcett Library. Questionnaires were returned by 147 researchers, for a response rate of 83%. Background information on the study, its aims and methodology, is followed by a report on the results of the mailed questionnaire as analyzed using SPSS-X (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Results are reported in the following areas: response rate; topics and purpose of research; frequency of library use; libraries and library materials used; awareness of the Fawcett Library; use and non-use of the Fawcett Library; and awareness, use, and evaluation of BiblioFem. Results from the interviews are detailed by subject and level of study; patterns of use; and facilities and materials used. The questionnaire and a guide to the interview topics as well as details on the Fawcett Library (charges, borrowing arrangements, and hours of service) are appended. (THC)

LIBRARY RESEARCH DIGEST

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ED264894

WOMEN'S STUDIES:

An Examination of Library Use by Researchers in the Field with Special Reference to the Fawcett Library

by

Pauline Blagden

October 1985

LLRS Publications
City of London Polytechnic
Calcutta House,
Old Castle Street,
London, E1 7NT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Philip Payne, Planning and Development Librarian at the City of London Polytechnic, for writing the SPSS program used in the analysis of the postal questionnaire, and the staff of the Fawcett Library for their co-operation and assistance with all aspects of the study. Thanks are due too to the Feminist Library, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London, WC2 for the use of their Research Index.

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1. BACKGROUND

The Fawcett Library, a collection of international importance in the field of Women's Studies, is housed at the City of London Polytechnic. It is Britain's main historical research library on all aspects of women in society but it contains much current material. Its stock includes about 40,000 books, pamphlets and leaflets; over 700 periodical titles and 500 boxes of archives. These archives include the letters and papers of eminent feminists such as Josephine Butler, Maude Royden, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Eleanor Rathbone, Teresa Billington-Greig and many others, as well as the papers of several women's organisations. Newspaper cuttings, photographs, posters and memorabilia are also available.

Subjects covered encompass most aspects of women's place in society - women's suffrage, work, education; women and the church, the law, sport; women artists, musicians, writers, scientists and engineers; women's organisations, fashion, prostitution, abortion, contraception; women's liberation, and so on. Most of the material concerns women in Britain but many other countries are represented.

Like many other libraries at this time, the Fawcett Library faces constraints of money, space and staff time and has been reviewing its Acquisitions Policy with these factors in mind. Although it was appreciated that it is not possible to predict future demand from present usage patterns, it was felt that information about library use by researchers in the area of Women's Studies would help to ensure that resources are used in the most effective way possible.

2. AIMS OF THE STUDY

2.1. One aim of the study was to gain an insight into the use made of libraries generally by researchers in the field of Women's Studies, covering the following areas:

- subject and level of study
- patterns of library use
- facilities and types of materials used
- barriers to effective use

2.2. A further aim was to focus on the use made of the Fawcett Library and of its catalogue "BiblioFem" and to investigate the reasons for non-use by those to whom it seemed potentially relevant.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was undertaken in two parts.

3.1. Postal questionnaire

A list of researchers in the United Kingdom working in the area of Women's Studies was compiled from:

a) The Research Index at the Feminist Library

b) Research in British Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges. British Library (1983)

A postal questionnaire (Appendix 1) was distributed to these reserchers in June 1984 with a follow-up approximately two weeks later to those who had not replied. The results were analysed using SPSS-X.

3.2. Interviews

In order to explore the use of the Fawcett Library itself in more depth than is possible with a postal questionnaire, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted in June and July 1984 with library users actually in the Fawcett Library, while, it was hoped, details were fresh in their minds. Interviews were considered more appropriate than questionnaires in this case, because of the opportunities afforded for clarification of questions and responses. Semi-structured interviews would, it was felt, enable respondents to answer in depth, while covering all the topics with which the study was concerned. The guide to the interview topics is included as Appendix 2.

4. RESULTS - POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

4.1. Response rate

Of the 178 questionnaires distributed, 147 were returned, a response rate of 83%.

4.2. Topics of research

The responses to this question illustrate just how broad a range of topics can be included in the term "women's studies". Examples of subjects on which respondents were working on include women's centres, anorexia nervosa, marriage breakdown, equal opportunities for women in the National Health Service, girls and occupational choice, the significance of clothing to professional women in job attainment and promotion, women and The Passion in the fourteenth century, women in power politics in the USSR. The interests of individual respondents were sometimes wide. One listed leisure, education, work and unemployment. Another listed health, childcare, education, employment and marriage. Responses were broadly grouped in order to gain a clearer picture of the range of topics being studied, although it was appreciated that such an approach will over-simplify the situation where subjects are inter disciplinary. The results are shown in Table 1. The preponderance of sociological topics (43%) is not surprising, comprising as it does a wide range of subjects concerned with the position of women in society. The popularity of subjects dealing with women and employment is perhaps also to be expected at the present time.

TABLE 1

SUBJECT AREAS OF TOPICS GIVEN BY RESPONDENTS

SUBJECT AREA	Number	%
Religion and philosophy	5	3.4
Sociology	43	29.3
Politics	9	6.1
Employment	26	17.6
Law	2	1.4
Social services	14	9.5
Education	10	6.8
Medicine	8	5.4
Arts	6	4.1
Literature	7	4.8
Other/too broad to classify	17	11.6
	147	100

4.2.1. Limitations of historical period

The research topics of 50 (34%) of the respondents were in some sense historical. Of these 6 (11%) specified a period before 1800, 17 (34%) were working on the period 1801-1900, 13 (26%) were dealing with a period after 1901. The remaining 14 subjects (28%) covered broader historical periods.

4.2.2. Limitations of geographical area

53 (36%) of the respondents said that they limited their research to a specific geographical area. It is possible that other respondents do in fact confine their work to a limited area, even though this was not specified in their answers. One respondent said that she limited her research to the United Kingdom. A further 22 (42%) were working on a particular place or area in the United Kingdom. 7 respondents (13%) were concerned with other areas in Europe. The remaining 23 (43%) were studying "Third World" areas.

4.3. Purpose of research

Respondents were asked about the purposes of their research. More than one response was allowed. 74 respondents (52%) said that they were working for a qualification. The qualifications for which they were preparing are shown in Table 2. 62.2% of those working for a qualification were registered for a PhD. This may well be connected with the sources from which the names of respondents were drawn.

TABLE 2

QUALIFICATIONS FOR WHICH RESPONDENTS WERE REGISTERED

QUALIFICATION	NUMBER	%
BA/BSc	4	5.4
MA	13	17.5
M Phil	7	9.5
Ph D	46	62.2
Other	4	5.4
	74	100

Researchers were also asked about the institution at which they were registered. 36 different institutions were mentioned in the responses. 61 (82.4%) were registered at universities, 9 (12.2%) were registered at polytechnics and 4 (5.4%) at other institutions. 21 respondents (28.4%) were registered at institutions in London. Of the 147 respondents, 83 (56.6%) said that they undertook their research for personal interest. 75 respondents (51.0%) were undertaking research as part of their job. 88 respondents (59.9%) were working with a view to publication. Nine respondents gave other reasons for doing research. 5 (3.4%) said that they were doing their work for women. For instance, one respondent, working on women and social policy said the one purpose of her work was "to contribute to the public debate on the position of women and advance the cause of female independence". 4 respondents (2.7%) specifically mentioned political activity.

4.4. Frequency of Library use

In this question, respondents were asked to circle a number on a scale of 1 to 5 depending on how frequently they made use of libraries, "1" representing "frequently" and "5", "never". This format worked reasonably well in this and in some subsequent questions, though a few respondents did misunderstand slightly, circling one of the words "frequently" or "never" instead of a number. No attempt was made to gain more specific information about the exact frequency of library use since it was respondents' perceptions in which we were interested.

The results are shown in Table 3. Over half the respondents (51%) circled number "1", indicating that they made frequent use of libraries. However, the "halo effect" cannot be discounted entirely, since it was from a library that the questionnaire came.

TABLE 3

FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY USE

NUMBER CIRCLED	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	%
Frequently		
1	73	51.0
2	17	11.9
3	34	23.8
4	14	9.8
5	5	3.5
Never		
	143	100.0

4.5. Types of Materials Used

The same format as in the previous question was used, respondents being asked to circle a number on a scale of 1 to 5 according to how frequently they used particular types of library materials for their research. "1" represented frequently and "5" never. Table 4 shows the detailed results.

TABLE 4

TYPES OF LIBRARY MATERIALS USED

MATERIALS	NUMBER CIRCLED										TOTAL	
	FREQUENTLY								NEVER			
	1		2		3		4		5			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Books	100	69.4	16	11.1	17	11.8	9	6.3	2	1.4	144	100.0
Current journals	68	47.6	26	18.2	29	20.3	16	11.2	4	2.8	143	100.1
Retrospective journals	69	47.6	40	27.6	24	16.6	8	5.5	4	2.8	145	100.1
UK theses	9	6.5	11	7.9	30	21.6	45	32.4	44	31.7	139	100.1
Foreign theses	3	2.2	5	3.6	19	13.8	24	17.4	87	63.0	138	100.0
Statistics	25	18.1	22	15.9	24	17.4	25	18.1	42	30.4	138	99.9
Pictorial material	9	6.6	9	6.6	13	9.5	26	19.0	80	58.4	137	100.1
Archival material	29	21.0	12	8.7	15	10.9	20	14.5	62	44.9	138	100.0
Films and videos	6	4.4	5	3.7	14	10.3	14	10.3	97	71.3	136	100.0
Sound recordings	7	5.2	0	0.0	5	3.7	16	11.9	106	79.1	134	99.9

Not surprisingly, books and journals appeared to be most frequently used. 116 respondents (80.6%) circled numbers 1 or 2 for books. 109 (75.2%) circled 1 or 2 for retrospective journals and 94 (65.7%) circled 1 or 2 for current journals. Others materials were much less frequently used, the least popular being films and video recordings for which 97 respondents (71.3%) circled the number 5, and sound recordings, for which 106 respondents (79%) circled the number 5. It is interesting to note that 41 respondents (29.7%) circled the numbers 1 and 2 for their use of archives.

4.6. Libraries used

Respondents were asked to name the libraries which they used for their research. Only two respondents (1.5%) said that they did not use any libraries. Both these respondents were investigating women's experience of particular health care facilities.

One of them wrote, "Basically our research is aimed at finding out about what is going on currently therefore libraries are of limited use. We receive most relevant/interesting periodicals and statistics in the office where we are based". 26 respondents (19.8%) named only one library and 25 respondents (19.1%) named two libraries. 35 respondents listed 3 libraries, 16 respondents listed 4 libraries, 27 listed 4 or more. There were 16 respondents who did not make it clear how many libraries they used. The mean number of libraries listed was 3, perhaps surprisingly low. However, even though there was no specific question about it, 13 respondents mentioned that they used the inter-library loans service for material which they required which was not available in the library or libraries which they normally used. For instance, one respondent wrote about "almost exclusively replying on the excellent inter-loan library service which is available to me free." Another wrote of "extensive use of the inter-library loan system."

The types of libraries which respondents used were analysed. The results are shown in Table 5. Polytechnic and university libraries were used by 136 respondents (92.5%). Nearly half the respondents (47.6%) listed special or government libraries. 50 respondents (34.0%) said that they used national collections and 38 (25.9%) used public libraries.

TABLE 5

TYPE OF LIBRARIES USED

TYPE OF LIBRARY	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	%
University/polytechnic	136	92.5
Government/special	70	47.6
National	50	34.0
Public	38	25.9

4.7. Awareness of the Fawcett Library

The questionnaire then focused on the Fawcett Library, asking whether or not respondents had heard of it. 118 (80.3%) said that they had. 29 (19.7%) had not.

4.8. Use of the Fawcett Library

Those respondents who had heard of the Fawcett Library were asked to circle a number on a scale of 1 to 5 as in two previous questions, according to how frequently they had used the collection. The number "1" indicated frequent use and "5" that they had never used it. Of the 118 respondents who had heard of the Fawcett Library 83 (70.3%) had never visited it. A further 18 (15.3%) circled the number "4", only 10 respondents (8.3%) circled the numbers "1" or "2", and another 7 (5.9%) circled the number "3".

4.9. Non-use of the Fawcett Library

Respondents who had never visited the Fawcett Library, were asked to indicate the reasons. Four possible reasons for non-use were suggested on the questionnaire; that the subject coverage was not relevant, that it was too far to travel, that the opening hours were inconvenient, or that readers must pay to use the library. Only 5 respondents (6.0%) indicated that the opening hours were inconvenient and only 8 respondents (9.6%) gave having to pay as a reason for not using the library. 17 respondents (20.5%) felt that the subject cover was not relevant. This seemed surprising in 7 of these cases, since the researchers were working on areas which could be broadly classified as sociology, politics or education which one might imagine would be covered by the Fawcett Library. Two of these respondents were dealing with other countries, one with USSR and the other with India and Africa. Two others were studying women in England in medieval and early modern times. Another was studying women in a particular region, West Yorkshire. One was examining the careers of women teachers and the another marriage breakdown. Comments by two of these respondents suggested that the Fawcett Library is associated with historical perspectives. One wrote, "I assume it's mostly historical and archival - would travel if I knew it would be relevant". The other wrote "In the last 5 years I've moved away from the historical which I associate with the Fawcett". 41 respondents (49.4%) did not use the Fawcett Library because it was too far to travel. Respondents were also asked to write in any other reasons they may have had for using the Fawcett Library. 14 respondents said that they were in need of more information about the Library, its subject coverage, opening hours, location and so on. For example, one person wrote "Not sure of its contents" and another wrote "Insufficient information about is subject coverage." Another respondent "knew little about it other than name". 8 respondents did not use the Fawcett Library because they had adequate alternatives, 6 because of lack of time, 1 because of "shyness".

4.10. Awareness of BiblioFem

BiblioFem, the Fawcett Library's microfiche catalogue, also lists items on women, in English, which are not held in the Library. It is available on subscription and is held in 33 libraries in various parts of the country. Respondents were asked whether they had heard of BiblioFem. 53 respondents (36.1%) had heard of it, 94 (63.9%) had not. The number of respondents who had heard of BiblioFem (53) was less than half the number who had heard of the Fawcett Library (118). It should be noted, however, that the survey was conducted in May and June 1984, before the appointment of a temporary part-time BiblioFem/cataloguing co-ordinator.

Some respondents took the trouble to write in comments about BiblioFem. 3 people felt that it was not useful to them personally because of the subjects of their research, that is, very little had been written on their particular subjects. One respondent felt that it should be made clearer whether the Fawcett Library actually held the book. Another said that there were too many books with the same class number and she was unable to pick out the ones specifically relating to her subject. Another felt that its international coverage was poor. Two respondents made very positive comments. One said, "We are going to have it i.e. it's good!" The other said, "In general I think it is a marvellous project and strongly support it."

4.11. Use of BiblioFem by Fawcett Library Users

Of the 35 respondents who had used the Fawcett Library (paragraph 4.8), 28 (80%) said that they had heard of BiblioFem. This indicates a greater awareness of BiblioFem among Fawcett Library users than among respondents in general, of whom 36.1% had heard of it (paragraph 4.10). However, 7 Fawcett Library users said they had never heard of BiblioFem (20%) and 11 Fawcett Library users (31.4%) said that they had never used BiblioFem. It is possible, of course, that people were unaware that the Fawcett Library catalogue is known as BiblioFem.

Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they had used BiblioFem by circling a number on a scale of 1 to 5, "1" representing frequently and "5" never. Only 1 respondent (1.9%) circled the number 1, 2 respondents (3.8%) circled the number 2 and 5 respondents (9.4%) circled the number 3. 15 respondents (28.3%) circled number 4 and the remaining 30 respondents (56.6%) who had heard of BiblioFem, circled the number 5, indicating that they had never used it.

Those who had used BiblioFem were asked where they had seen it. 10 respondents (43.5%) had consulted BiblioFem in the Fawcett Library. 4 respondents (17.4%) had used BiblioFem at other libraries in London. Other locations mentioned were the Equal Opportunities Commission in Manchester (2), Bradford University (3) and the Open University (1). 3 respondents gave more than one location.

4.12. Evaluation of BiblioFem

4.12.1. Respondents were asked to evaluate various aspects of BiblioFem by circling numbers on scale 1 to 5, "1" indicating "excellent" and "5" indicating "unsatisfactory". The results are summarised in Table 6. Unfortunately, very few people felt able to answer these questions. One commented "I don't know enough to answer". There was clearly a tendency to circle number 3.

TABLE 6

EVALUATION OF BIBLIOFEM

ASPECT	NO. OF RESPONSES	EXCELLENT 1	2	3	UNSATISFACTORY 4	5
Layout of entries	19	2	7	9	0	1
Subject coverage	20	4	5	4	6	1
Subject arrangement	20	2	5	10	2	1
Up-to-date coverage	16	3	5	5	3	0
Physical format	19	2	3	8	4	2
Overall usefulness	20	2	1	8	5	4

5. INTERVIEWS WITH FAWCETT LIBRARY USERS

It should be emphasised that the approach adopted with the eight semi-structured interviews was purely qualitative. Respondents were not selected on any statistical basis. The purpose of the interviews was to build up a picture of how a small number of readers made use of the Fawcett Library's resources in order to illustrate some of the ways in which the collection is exploited.

5.1. Subject and level of study

Three of the respondents were students. One was at the City of London Polytechnic and was working in the Fawcett Library on a BA project on the role of women in the General Strike of 1926. Another was at Manchester Polytechnic and was preparing a BA dissertation on "Tory women and higher education 1860-1940". The third was at the London School of Economics working for an MA on women and communism, covering all communist countries at the present day. The other five respondents were all experienced researchers. All were academics, three from the United States, one from Canada and one from the United Kingdom. All were preparing books or articles for publication. The topics on which they were working reflected some of the diversity of subjects which come under the umbrella of Women's Studies, ranging from marriage law, reforms in nineteeth-century England to diet, nutrition and ageing in Africa. Another respondent was studying women and work in England in 1930s, another was looking at suffrage imagery in the early twentieth century, while the last was compiling a feminist dictionary. Not surprisingly in view of the library's coverage, seven of the eight respondents were concerned with historical perspectives and seven of the eight came to the library chiefly for British material, even the researcher on diet in Africa was seeking information on English women who went out there.

5.2. Patterns of use

5.2.1. Three respondents could not recall how they had first heard of the Fawcett Library. All had been interested in Women's Studies for a considerable time and had been aware of the Library's existence for many years. Word of mouth was the commonest way in which other respondents heard about the Fawcett Library. One of the students said that she had been told about it by friends in Germany. One of the lecturers said that she had learnt about it five years ago from colleagues in the United States and another had heard of it at a conference. The City of London Polytechnic student had been recommneded to use the Fawcett Library by a lecturer. The other student, not knowing which would be the most suitable library to use for her work, had approached her local public library. They had provided a list of possibilities which included the Fawcett Library.

5.2.2. One American resercher was on her third visit, having previously been in 1981 and in 1982. She stayed for about a week each time. Another said that she spent "blocks of time" in the Fawcett Library, coming to England specially to use the collection while on sabbatical. Another American was on her first visit to the country and to the Fawcett Library, having flown over primarily to visit someone in Cambridge.

The Canadian had first visited the Fawcett Library about eight months previously. The British lecturer described her visits as "erratic" but had been coming since 1982. Two of the students were at early stages in their work, one on her first visit to the Fawcett Librry and the other on her second. The other student said she had been coming about once a fortnight for a few months.

5.2.3. Most respondents used other libraries besides the Fawcett, the British Museum and the libraries of their own institutions being most frequently mentioned. One student thought she would not need to use any other libraries as she seemed to be able to find everything she needed at the Fawcett. On the whole, though, respondents said they were willing to travel to find the right material. One said she would "go anywhere the literature takes me." The City of London Polytechnic student pointed out that her project counted as 2/11th of her degree. She therefore regarded it as important and would travel at least anywhere in London if necessary. All respondents lived or were staying fairly near the the Fawcett Library, the furthest away being at Hendon. Generally, they regarded the location of the Fawcett Library as fairly convenient. One described it as "not the most central but OK once you are on the tube." Another said "at least it's in London".

5.2.4. The length of time respondents spent in the library varied considerably. Two of the students planned to stay only for one to two hours, one of them pointing out however that she might stay for longer when she was further into her work. The other said she would stay for longer were she not able to borrow much of the material she needed. The third student, on her first visit was not sure how long she would be staying. The academics tended to stay for most of the day. One said she had a "self-imposed minimum of time" of three hours. Respondents were generally satisfied with the opening hours, one describing them as "not inconvenient" even though the Library had been closed the first time she came. Another said that she would stay longer if the Library were open later, but that the opening hours were "quite fine". While admitting that the present opening hours had suited their needs, two respondents felt that evening opening was obviously a good thing. One respondent would value being able to come in and work through the afternoon and evening as she often lectures in the morning. She would also appreciate weekend opening. Another would like to be able to return to the Library to do a bit more work in the evening after supper.

5.2.5. The three students all had criticisms of the working conditions in the Fawcett Library. One said she was not sure where she might sit and would have preferred somewhere quieter and more separated from the counter, complaining that people were walking past all the time. The third student, on the other hand, while finding the library "tiny and really pokey" and commenting on the shortage of tables, thought that it was a good place to work because it was quiet. One of the academics found the working conditions "fine - pleasant and friendly". Some of the others, however, had specific criticisms. One disliked working in a basement, especially on a fine summer's day.

Another said that the fluorescent lighting tended to cause headaches. A third said the Library could "obviously use more space" and suggested that it would be helpful to have rooms where discussions could take place without disturbuting other readers.

5.3. Facilities and materials used

5.3.1. The types of materials which readers use will to a degree depend on their subject of study and the level at which they approach it. Books were used by all respondents and journals by seven of them. The MA student had so far consulted books and periodicals and thought she might move on to the other types of materials if they proved relevant". Researchers who had used the library on several occasions were aware of, and used, a wide range of materials, listing between them newspaper cuttings, archive material, postcards, pamphlets, autograph letters, posters and banners. The researcher working on marriage law reform said that, while she could obtain parliamentary papers in the United States, the Fawcett Library was invaluable for pamphlets and more ephemeral material.

5.3.2. When it came to tracing materials, one of the students, admittedly on her first visit to the Fawcett Library, was having difficulties. She had been shown the catalogue when she came in, but this had led her to only one book. She said she would like to use some journal articles but did not know how to trace them. The other respondents appeared to have no such problems. Both the other students said that they asked the staff when they could not find what they wanted. All the academics used the catalogues but also relied on the staff, of whom they spoke very highly. One said that the staff knew what she was working on and drew things to her attention. They were, she said, "enormously helpful". Another described their knowledge as "marvellous" and another said "they could not have been more helpful". One respondent spoke of the improvement in the catalogues since she first used the Fawcett Library seven or eight years ago. When she first came, she was unable to trace certain items which she has subsequently come across and which would have been useful. Two respondents in particular acknowledged the importance of what one called "the serendipity approach", that is coming across useful items by chance, regarding that as being inherent in the nature of research.

5.3.3. Those who had used the catalogues extensively were able to identify particular problems. The researcher working on marriage law reform had had difficulties with the subject approach and found that she had missed items through not using the correct search terms. They were all able to identify a few gaps in the collections - the periodical "Time and Tide" and some well-known feminist postcards, for example. Generally, however, the Fawcett Library was highly regarded, one respondent even going so far as to describe it as the "best library in the world for what I'm doing", which was compiling a feminist dictionary.

5.3.4. No one expressed strong feelings about borrowing arrangements or charges. Of the three students two borrowed material, one saying that it would be inconvenient if she were not allowed to. The third student had not yet borrowed material but intended to do so. Two of the academics had never borrowed material, two had borrowed occasionally and the other said she tended to read confined material during the day and, where possible, borrow books to read in the evening. One respondent commented that she had never been inconvenienced by material being out on loan, but she tended not to be looking for the most popular books.

5.3.5. Respondents did not mind paying to use the Fawcett libry. Two people felt that there should generally be reciprocal arrangements between polytechnics but acknowledged that the Fawcett Library was a special case, "a research library with specialised materials" as one put it. One respondent described the amount as "ridiculously low" but felt that it was important to have concessions for students and others not in employment. Two Americans felt that the cost was minimal in relation to their other expenses, notably the transatlantic air fare and one felt that she got excellent value for money because the staff devoted so much time to her.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. "Women's Studies" encompasses a wide range of subjects (paragraph 4.2) and many researchers in the field make extensive use of libraries (paragraph 4.4), although in some cases they are not appropriate (paragraph 4.6). It would be difficult for one library to service all aspects and some degree of specialisation is a practicable course. This is particularly true in London where there are a number of libraries covering various aspects of "women's studies".

6.2. The high percentage of researchers working for higher degrees (paragraph 4.3) emphasises the need for specialised library resources of the appropriate level. This is not to say that specialised libraries, such as the Fawcett, have nothing to offer to more general enquirers.

6.3. Over 80% of respondents had heard of the Fawcett Library (paragraph 4.7) but less than one third of these had ever visited it (paragraph 4.8). Responses to the question about non-use (paragraph 4.9) suggested that greater publicity might bring about increased use.

6.4. The lack of awareness of BiblioFem (paragraphs 4.10-4.12) was disappointing in view of the effort put into its compilation. The recent appointment of the temporary part-time BiblioFem/Cataloguing Co-ordinator may have increased awareness of the service.

6.5. There were criticisms of the working conditions in the Fawcett Library (paragraph 5.2.5). However, the richness of the collection and the expertise of the staff were very highly regarded by the users who were interviewed, some of whom travelled considerable distances to use the collection (paragraphs 5.3.2 and 5.3.3). It was recognised as a specialist research library of outstanding importance. There are, of course, practical problems, beyond the scope of this study, concerning the place of such a library within a polytechnic library system. Nevertheless a collection of such value is surely to be regarded as an asset on which the Polytechnic should capitalise.

REFERENCE

British Library (1983)
Research in British universities, polytechnics and colleges, government departments and other institutions. v.3 Social sciences. - Boston Spa: British Library Lending Division.

CITY OF LONDON POLYTECHNIC
LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES SERVICE

LIBRARY USE BY RESEARCHERS IN THE FIELD OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THE COLUMN

1. Please describe briefly the topic(s) of your research?

11

2. What is the purpose of your research? YOU MAY TICK MORE THAN ONE BOX.

- For a qualification ☐
- For personal interest ☐
- As part of your job ☐
- For publication ☐
- Other ..... (Please specify)

17

If your research is leading to a qualification, what is it?

- B.A./B.Sc. ☐
- M.A./M.Sc. ☐
- M.Phil ☐
- Ph.D ☐
- Other ..... (Please specify)

22

And at which institution are you registered?

23

3. How frequently do you use libraries in the course of your research? PLEASE CIRCLE A NUMBER ON THE SCALE BELOW.

Frequently 1 2 3 4 5 **Never**

20

25

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THE COLUMN

4. To what extent do you use the following types of library materials for your research? PLEASE CIRCLE NUMBERS ON THE SCALES BELOW.

Books	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	Never	
Current journals	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	Never	
Back issues of journals	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	Never	
Theses from universities/ polytechnics in the UK	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	Never	
Theses from universities abroad	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	Never	
Statistical information	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	Never	
Pictorial material	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	Never	
Archival material	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	Never	
Films or videos	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	Never	26
Sound recordings	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	Never	31

5. Which libraries do you use in the course of your research?

36

6. Have you heard of the Fawcett Library?

Yes ☐

No ☐

IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED NO TO THE QUESTION ABOVE, PLEASE NOW ANSWER QUESTION 9.

41

7. How frequently have you visited the Fawcett Library? PLEASE CIRCLE A NUMBER ON THE SCALE BELOW.

Frequently 1 2 3 4 5 Never

42

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS COLUMN

8. If you have NEVER visited the Fawcett Library, please would you indicate the reason below. YOU MAY TICK MORE THAN ONE BOX.

The subject coverage is not relevant ☐

It is too far to travel ☐

The opening hours are inconvenient ☐

Readers must pay to use the Library ☐

Other ..... ☐
(Please specify)

43

9. Have you heard of BiblioFem?

Yes ☐

No ☐

49

IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED **NO** TO THE QUESTION ABOVE, YOU NEED NOT ANSWER THE REMAINING QUESTIONS.

10. How frequently did you use BiblioFem? PLEASE CIRCLE A NUMBER ON THE SCALE BELOW.

Frequently 1 2 3 4 5 Never

50

IF YOU HAVE **NEVER** USED BIBLIOFEM, YOU NEED NOT ANSWER THE REMAINING QUESTIONS.

11. Where did you use BiblioFem?

51

12. Please evaluate the following aspects of BiblioFem. PLEASE CIRCLE NUMBERS ON THE SCALES BELOW.

Layout of entries Excellent 1 2 3 4 5 Unsatisfactory

Subject coverage Excellent 1 2 3 4 5 Unsatisfactory

Subject arrangement Excellent 1 2 3 4 5 Unsatisfactory

Up-to-date coverage Excellent 1 2 3 4 5 Unsatisfactory

Physical format Excellent 1 2 3 4 5 Unsatisfactory

52

	PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS COLUMN
13. Overall, how useful is BiblioFem for your research? PLEASE CIRCLE A NUMBER ON THE SCALE BELOW. VERY USEFUL 1 2 3 4 5 OF NO USE	57

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE. PLEASE RETURN IT TO:

PAULINE BLAGDEN,
RESEARCH LIBRARIAN,
CITY OF LONDON POLYTECHNIC,
CALCUTTA HOUSE PRECINCT,
OLD CASTLE STREET,
LONDON, E1 7NT

MAY 1984

APPENDIX 2

FAWCETT LIBRARY USER STUDY

Interview Topics

A. Subject and level of study

- Precise subject
- Limitations - period - area - other
- Purpose of research
- What qualification?
- Which institution?

B. Patterns of use

- How did you hear of the Fawcett Library?
- How often do you come?
- Other libraries used
- Travelling distance
- Location of Fawcett Library
- Time spent in Fawcett Library
- Opening hours
- Working conditions

C. Facilities and materials used

- Types of materials
- Approaches to locating material
- Convenience of catalogues
- Gaps in collection
- Borrowing arrangements
- Charges

APPENDIX 3

FAWCETT LIBRARY

Charges

Normal subscriptions	£5.00
Full-time student subscription	£2.50
Fawcett Society members	£2.50
Friends of the Fawcett Society	£2.50
City of London Polytechnic students and staff	Free
Day fee for non-members (no borrowing rights)	£1.00

Borrowing Arrangements

Subscribers may borrow up to 4 books (not pamphlets, leaflets, periodicals etc.) for up to three weeks at a time, so long as they are not from a locked collection or published before 1920 or in poor physical condition or reference or short loan copies.

Opening hours

Monday	1.00 p.m. - 8.30 p.m.	during Polytechnic terms
	10.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.	during vacations
Tuesday-Friday	10.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.	

LIBRARY RESEARCH DIGESTS

Library Research Digests are either resumes of the interim or final results of larger studies being undertaken by the Polytechnic Library or reports of small-scale research projects. They are distributed both internally to library staff and to interested individuals and interested organisations outside. We welcome comments, criticism and suggestions from any source on our research work.

The ones produced to date have been:

1. One-week loan monitoring at Moorgate Library (1981)
2. Comparison of acquisitions in Sociology and Mathematics 1980-1981 (1981)
3. 'In-house' use of the Polytechnic Library (1982)
4. Part-time students: studies of their use of a Polytechnic Library (1983)
5. Monitoring the effectiveness of lending stock (1984)
6. Book selection and use (1984)
7. Analysis of reference enquiries at Central House Library (1984)
8. 'In-house' use of the Polytechnic Library by subject (1984)
9. Peak levels of seat occupancy (1984)
10. The Library needs of part-time students preparing for professional examinations (1984) (£2.00)
11. Reshelving survey (1985)
12. Stock census and catalogue discrepancy 1984 (1985)
13. Analysis of reference enquires 1984/85 (1985)
14. Women's studies: an examination of library use by researchers in the field with special reference to the Fawcett Library (1985) (£3.00)
15. Journal use at Moorgate Library (1985)
16. Journal use at Central House Library (1985)
17. Journal use at Walburgh House Library (1985)
18. New acquisitions, loan strategies and library use; an assessment using SWALCAP management information (1985) (£2.00)

Copies of Library Research Digests may be obtained free of charge unless otherwise indicated from:

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